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CAUCUS SYSTEM

BY

FREDERICK W. WHITRIDGE

AN ESSAY PREPARED FOR VOL. I OF THE "CYCLOPÆDIA OF POLITICAL
SCIENCE, POLITICAL ECONOMY, AND OF THE POLITICAL HISTORY
OF THE UNITED STATES," EDITED BY JOHN J. LALOR

(Issued by permission of the publishers, Messrs. Rand, McNally & Co., Chicago)

NEW YORK
THE SOCIETY FOR POLITICAL EDUCATION
4 MORTON STREET
1883

The Society for Political Education.

(ORGANIZED 1880.)

OBJECTS.—The SOCIETY was organized by citizens who believe that the success of our government depends on the active political influence of educated intelligence, and that parties are means, not ends. It is entirely non-partisan in its organization, and is not to be used for any other purpose than the awakening of an intelligent interest in government methods and purposes tending to restrain the abuse of parties and to promote party morality.

Among its organizers are numbered Democrats, Republicans, and Independents, who differ among themselves as to which party is best fitted to conduct the government, but who are in the main agreed as to the following propositions :

The right of each citizen to his free voice and vote must be upheld.

Office-holders must not control the suffrage.

The office should seek the man, and not the man the office.

Public service, in business positions, should depend solely on fitness and good behavior.

The crimes of bribery and corruption must be relentlessly punished.

Local issues should be independent of national parties.

Coins made unlimited legal tender must possess their face value as metal in the markets of the world.

Sound currency must have a metal basis,

and all paper money must be convertible on demand.

Labor has a right to the highest wages it can earn, unhindered by public or private tyranny.

Trade has the right to the freest scope, unfettered by taxes, except for government expenses.

Corporations must be restricted from abuse of privilege.

Neither the public money nor the people's land must be used to subsidize private enterprise.

A public opinion, wholesome and active, unhampered by machine control, is the true safeguard of popular institutions.

Persons who become members of the Society are not, however, required to endorse the above.

METHODS.—The Society proposes to carry out its objects by submitting from time to time to its members lists of books which it regards as desirable reading on current political and economic questions ; by selecting annual courses of reading for its members ; by supplying the books so selected at the smallest possible advance beyond actual cost ; by furnishing and circulating, at a low price and in cheap form, sound economic and political literature in maintenance and illustration of the principles above announced as constituting the basis of its organization ; and by assisting in the formation of reading and corresponding circles and clubs for discussing social, political, and economic questions.

ORGANIZATION.—The Society is to be managed by an Executive Committee of twenty-five persons, selected from different sections of the United States.

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CAUCUS SYSTEM.

A CAUCUS, in the political vocabulary of the United States, is primarily a private meeting of voters holding similar views, held prior to an election, for the purpose of furthering such views at the election. With the development of parties, and the rule of majorities, the caucus or some equivalent has become an indispensable adjunct of party government, and it may now be defined as a meeting of the majority of the electors belonging to the same party in any political or legislative body, held preliminary to a meeting thereof, for the purpose of selecting candidates to be voted for, or for the purpose of determining the course of the party at the meeting of the whole body. The candidates of each party are universally selected by caucus, either directly, or indirectly through delegates to conventions chosen in caucuses. In legislative bodies the course of each party is often predetermined with certainty in caucus, and open discussion between parties has been, in consequence, in some degree superseded. The caucus system is, in short, the basis of a complete electoral system which has grown up within each party, side by side with that which is alone contemplated by the laws. This condition has in recent years attracted much attention, and has been

bitterly denounced as an evil. It was, however, early foreseen. John Adams, in 1814, wrote in the "Tenth Letter on Government": "They have invented a balance to all balance in their caucuses. We have congressional caucuses, state caucuses, county caucuses, city caucuses, district caucuses, town caucuses, parish caucuses, and Sunday caucuses at church doors; and in these aristocratic caucuses *elections have been decided.*"

The caucus is a necessary consequence of majority rule. If the majority is to define the policy of a party, there must be some method within each party of ascertaining the mind of the majority, and settling the party programme, before it meets the opposing party at the polls. The Carlton and Reform clubs discharge for the tories and liberals many of the functions of a congressional caucus. Meetings of the members of the parties in the *Reichstag* and *corps législatif* and the chamber of deputies are not unusual, though they have generally merely been for consultation, and neither in England, France, Germany or Italy, has any such authority been conceded to the wish of the majority of a party as we have vested in the decision of a caucus. What has been called a caucus has been established by the liberals of Birmingham, England, as to which see a paper by W. Fraser Rae, in the "International Review" for August, 1880.

The origin of the term caucus is obscure. It has been derived from the Algonquin word *kaw-kaw-wus*—to consult, to speak,—but the more probable derivation makes it a corruption of caulkers. In the early politics of Boston, and particularly during the early difficulties between the townsmen and the British troops, the seafaring men and those employed about the ship-yards were prominent among

the towns-people, and there were numerous gatherings which may have very easily come to be called by way of reproach a meeting of caulkers after the least influential class who attended them, or from the caulking house or caulk house in which they were held. What was at first a derisive description, came to be an appellation, and the gathering of so-called caulkers became a caucus. John Pickering, in a vocabulary of words and phrases peculiar to the United States (Boston, 1816), gives this derivation of the word, and says several gentlemen mentioned to him that they had heard this was the derivation.

Gordon, writing in 1774, says: "More than fifty years ago Mr. Samuel Adams' father and twenty others, one or two from the north end of the town where all the ship business is carried on, used to meet, make a caucus, and lay their plan for introducing certain persons into places of trust and power. When they had settled it they separated, and each used their particular influence within his own circle. He and his friends would furnish themselves with ballots, including the names of the parties fixed upon, which they distributed on the days of election. By acting in concert, together with a careful and extensive distribution of ballots, they generally carried their elections to their own mind. In like manner it was that Mr. Samuel Adams first became a representative for Boston." (History of the American Revolution, vol. 1., p. 365.) February, 1763, Adams writes in his diary: "This day I learned that the caucus club meets at certain times in the garret of Tom Dawes, the adjutant of the Boston regiment. He has a large house and he has a movable partition in his garret which he takes down and the whole club meets in one room. There they smoke tobacco till you can not see

from one end of the room to the other. There they drink flip, I suppose, and there they choose a moderator who puts questions to the vote regularly; and selectmen, assessors, collectors, wardens, fire wards and representatives are regularly chosen before they are chosen in the town. Uncle Fairfield, Story, Ruddock, Adams, Cooper, and a *rudis indigestaque moles* of others, are members. They send committees to wait on the merchants' club, and to propose in the choice of men and measures. Captain Cunningham says, they have often solicited him to go to these caucuses, they have assured him benefit in his business, etc." (Adams' Works, vol. ii., p. 144.)

Under the title Caucus should be considered the congressional nominating caucus; the caucuses of legislative assemblies; primary elections, still known outside the larger cities as caucuses; the evils which have been attributed to the latter, and the remedies which have been proposed. These will accordingly be mentioned in the order given.

I. *The Congressional Caucus* marks the departure from the electoral scheme provided for by the constitution, and is the first appearance of the caucus, as we now understand it, in our history. In the continental and confederate congresses the pre-arrangement of business attributed to the caucus system, was in some measure accomplished by committees, but the first appearance of the existing institution is in the congressional nominating caucus. Members of congress held meetings quickly called caucuses, by which candidates were nominated, between whom it was understood the electors provided for by the constitution should choose, thus depriving the electors themselves of the free choice it was intended they should exercise, and thence it followed that the support of particu-

lar candidates soon became the sole issue in the choice of electors. In 1796 a general understanding among the members of congress of the republican and federal parties was had, that Jefferson and Adams should receive the votes of the republican and federal electors respectively, but this result does not seem to have been arrived at through formal meetings of those members. In 1800 such formal meetings were held by the members of both parties in congress, for the purpose of consulting about presidential candidates, great pains being taken at the time to preserve the fact of these meetings secret, on account of the popular jealousy of any attempt at general direction by those connected with the general government. Adams and Pinckney were selected by the federalists, with the understanding that each should be voted for equally, and Jefferson and Burr by the republicans, with, however, the distinct understanding that Jefferson was the candidate for the presidency.

In 1804 the first caucus, not secret, was held by the republicans. Jefferson was unanimously nominated for re-election, and George Clinton, governor of New York, substituted for Burr as the vice-presidential candidate, by a vote of 67 out of 107. The probability of a vacancy in the governorship of New York through the election of Clinton was thus created, and Burr was brought forward as an independent candidate. At a caucus of the federal members of the legislature at Albany his support was favored by a large majority, and the bitter opposition of Hamilton was the foundation of the feeling which culminated in the fatal duel. The proceedings of this federal caucus were said to have become known through Burr's friends who were concealed in an adjoining bedroom. C. C. Pinckney and Rufus King were selected by a federal caucus in this same year, as the federal candidates. The

republican congressional caucus in this year was much criticised because republican voters in congressional districts represented by federalists complained that they were unrepresented in it, and that they were therefore being dictated to by districts in which the republicans had the majority.

In 1808 Stephen R. Bradley, senator from Vermont, who had been chairman of the caucus in 1804, assumed the responsibility of sending out written notices to the republican members in both houses, to meet at a time specified in the notice, in the senate chamber. The purpose of the meeting was not mentioned in the call, but it was understood to be the selection of republican candidates to be voted for at the ensuing election. The result of this caucus had already been determined by private consultation, and out of 138 members 89 were present, by whom Madison and George Clinton were nominated by 83 and 79 votes respectively. This caucus was open, and proceeded as if the selection of candidates was its unquestioned business. In consequence, there appeared very soon a protest of 17 representatives, denying the authority of Bradley, the regularity of the caucus, and finally the necessity of any caucus whatever, which was stated only to have been necessary for the concentration of the party when the federal party was powerful. This protest the caucus had in a measure anticipated, by declaring that its members "acted only in their individual character as citizens." Separate caucuses were also held during this year by the members of the Virginia legislature, who favored Madison and Monroe respectively, for the purpose of furthering the candidacy of each.

In 1812 the republican caucus was attended by 82 members. It was held openly like the previous caucus, and the members resolved as before that they made the nomination

in their individual characters only. It took, however, one step forward, by the appointment of a committee of correspondence, of one member from each state, to see that the nominations it made were duly respected. Madison was unanimously renominated, with Gerry as vice-president, but it is noteworthy that a committee headed by Clay had formally demanded of Madison a war policy as the price of their support in the caucus. This caucus, like the last, was bitterly criticised, and on May 29 a caucus of 91 republican members of the New York legislature was held which refused to recognize the decision of the congressional caucus, and nominated De Witt Clinton by a vote of 87. In consequence of this, the federalists held in New York, in September, 1812, a national caucus or convention, composed of 70 delegates from eleven states, for further consultation, and by which it was resolved to give the federal support to Clinton.

In 1816 the attempt was made in the republican caucus by the friends of Crawford to declare the selection of candidates by the members of congress inexpedient, as the caucus was likely to be controlled by the friends of Monroe, but the attempt failed and Monroe was nominated by a vote of 65 to 54. Burr, who had done so much for the perfection of the caucus, had foreseen this result in 1815, and in order to defeat it had advised some popular nomination of Andrew Jackson, declaring that "if it could be made respectable his success would be inevitable."

In 1820 a call for a republican caucus was issued by Smith of Maryland, who had been chairman of the last caucus, but only about 50 members of congress attended, and the re-nomination of the incumbents was acquiesced in.

In 1824 a great question was raised as to whether there should be any attempt to nominate a candidate

by means of a caucus, and there was a combination of the friends of other candidates than Crawford to prevent such a caucus. It was, however, strenuously advocated by the Albany regency under the lead of Van Buren, which took the position that those who opposed the congressional caucus, which it called the "regular nomination," were to be treated as enemies of the democratic party, which was the first pronouncement of the more modern notions of the sanctity of party majorities and of all the proceedings of the party organization. During this discussion a caucus of the republican members of the New York legislature was held, which decided that a congressional caucus ought to be held, and an account of the proceedings of this New York caucus was forwarded to Washington, without, however, much influencing the result. Comparatively few members of congress attended the congressional caucus which was finally called, and its nomination of Crawford was of questionable assistance to him. This was the last congressional nominating caucus. In 1835 the democrats nominated candidates in a national convention, and in 1839 the whigs adopted the same method. While the congressional caucus lasted it is to be mentioned that the nominee and most of the candidates before the caucus had been, in every case after Jefferson's second term, previously nominated by the legislature of some state, or by a caucus of the members of one party in a state legislature.

II. *Legislative Caucuses.* It has been the practice for the members in each party in congress and the state legislatures to meet in a caucus and decide their course in the assembly by a vote of the majority. The officers to be elected by each legislative body are invariably so selected. The first mention of such caucuses

is in the Statesman's Manual, vol. i., p. 338, where, speaking of the second session of the eighth congress, it is said: "During the session of congress there was far less of free and independent discussion on the measures proposed by the friends of the administration than had been previously practiced in both branches of the national legislature. It appeared that on the most important subject the course adopted by the majority was the effect of caucus arrangement, or, in other words, had been previously agreed upon at meetings of the democratic members held in private. Thus the legislation was constantly swayed by party feelings and pledges rather than according to sound reason or personal conviction." Since that time the practice described has steadily increased, and at present the course of each party in the house of representatives with reference to any measure which has been made a party measure is determined in caucus. In particular the election of the officers of the house is predetermined in the caucuses of the party in the majority. Long and active canvasses are undertaken by candidates for the speakership, for the caucus nomination to that position. In the senate party lines are less strictly drawn, but when they are drawn, a caucus decision exercises the same authority over the majority there as elsewhere. In 1881 the caucus nominees of one party for the officers of the senate were generally alleged to be of worthless character. The opposite party, as a result of caucus deliberation, declined to permit these caucus nominations to be ratified by the election of the nominees. There ensued, in consequence of the unyielding adherence of senators to these caucus decisions, one of the most persistent "deadlocks" on record, in the course of which, members of each party produced the most gory speeches about the "revolu-

tionary" tendencies of their opponents; and the members of the senate, by what was felt to be their obdurate fidelity to their respective caucuses, in a petty matter, brought their body for a time into public contempt.

In the state legislatures the caucus system also prevails, but in a less degree than in congress. The authority of the caucus is there mainly invoked in the selection of candidates for the positions filled by the legislature itself. It is especially used in selecting the candidates for the speakership and for the United States senate. Aspirants for these positions not unfrequently attend at the place of meeting of the legislature in time to receive the members as they arrive, and to make personal supplication for their votes in caucus. Every sort of influence is brought to bear to obtain such votes, candidates often opening "headquarters," a sort of a club-room with free entertainment for all comers, and in one flagrant case a candidate for the senate was accompanied to the state capital by his wife, and his nomination and election were alleged to have been entirely due to the success of her personal appeals to members of the legislature for their votes in the party caucus. The whole of these influences are brought to bear to secure, not the votes of members in the legislature, but only the caucus nomination. No matter how that is secured, it stands as definitive. It determines the course of the legislature, and the decision of a legislative caucus about candidates has come consequently to be invested with all the attributes of a fetich. Politicians talk about it as if it possessed some peculiar and intrinsic virtue or efficacy, and members of the legislature are no more free to disregard such a nomination, no matter how ridiculous or scandalous it may be, and no matter by what agencies it

was secured, than they are free to violate their oaths. The notion that the legislative caucus was an opportunity for consultation has been eliminated, and it has become merely an instrumentality for conferring absolute power upon a majority.

III. *Primary Elections.* This expression is rapidly supplanting the use of the word caucus to designate the meetings of voters, for the direct nomination of candidates, or for the election of delegates to nominating conventions. In the country districts generally, and particularly in New England, the word caucus is still used. In the cities the increase of the safeguards which have been found necessary for the ascertainment of the results of a caucus have surrounded it with so many formalities that it is properly becoming known as a primary, or preliminary, election. Its primitive form is as follows: A few days before an election is to be held, or a convention to meet, a call is issued addressed to the members of one political party residing in the same election district, usually a township, calling upon them to meet at a specified time and place, for the purpose of holding a caucus to choose candidates or delegates. This call is posted in prominent places in the town, such as the post-office, but it is now also generally published in the local paper, if there be one. It was in the first instance usually issued by individuals acting on their own responsibility, and over their own names. At the appointed time those assembled in response to it are called to order by one of the signers of the call, and a presiding officer and secretary are nominated and selected. The meeting is then declared to be organized and ready to proceed to the transaction of business, the nature of which is stated either by the presiding officer or by the person by whom the meeting was called

to order. Any member of the caucus may nominate persons to be the candidate or delegates to be chosen, and several persons are usually nominated for each position. These nominations, if seconded, are acted upon in the order in which they are made. There is more or less formal debate, and the vote upon each nomination is taken *viva voce*, and the result announced by the chair. If the announcement is questioned, upon the demand of any member the vote is taken by a show of hands, or, more rarely, by actual count by the secretary and tellers. Members of the opposing party are not excluded from the meeting, but if detected in voting, any person may call the attention of the meeting thereto, and if the result has been effected in consequence, the intruder is turned out, and another vote taken, but the test of the right of any person to participate in the caucus is whether or not he voted with the party at the last general election, and of that fact his own assertion is almost invariably received as evidence. The caucus having made its nominations or selected its delegates, usually appoints a committee to prepare ballots and distribute them at the polls—though this is sometimes left to the enthusiasm of individuals,—and adjourns *sine die*. The secretary, if delegates have been chosen, gives them a letter stating the fact of their election, which serves as their credentials in the convention to which they have been sent. Up to this point the caucus presents very nearly the pure democratic ideal, a return to which is so frequently held up as the sole remedy for machine politics, and the exactness of this description may be verified every year, in parts of New England and the west. It is, however, the fact, constantly overlooked, that such a caucus system does not rest upon political equality, but upon an amount of actual and therefore

social equality, and of personal acquaintance among voters, which the great increase in the density of population and in the unequal distribution of wealth has tended to destroy, and which that increase has made impossible outside of small and comparatively thinly populated constituencies. The development of the caucus itself indicates this. As population thickens, especially in manufacturing districts, in which there is a large comparatively transient class of voters, the personal acquaintance of voters with each other is no longer sufficient to detect whether all those who participate in the caucus are members of the party, or even whether they are all voters within the district. Strange faces appear, and the caucus is found to be controlled by workers in a particular interest, who may not be residents of the district, or even members of the same political party. Consequently the use of a check list is necessitated as the remedy. That is, no person is allowed a vote whose name is not registered as a voter within the district at the last election, and if, as in some states, there are no registration laws, the only means of preventing fraud seems to be violence. So long also as the regular party caucus may be called by individuals acting on their own responsibility, there is found to be danger that two or more caucuses will be held, each claiming to be the regular caucus; the authority to call the caucus must therefore be located, and committees, for that purpose, and later, for the purpose of providing the proper check lists, and of taking charge of the organization of the caucus, have to be provided for. Such committees are the basis of the whole structure of American party government. The members of the committees thus appointed hold from year to year, and as they are frequently re-appointed, they come thereby naturally into that greater knowledge of the

politics and politicians of their districts which is the source of their undue political influence and of the power of political mechanism, which has lately attracted so much attention, and as the remedy for which, a return to that very system is urged, from which such committees have necessarily been evolved. With the increase of the necessity of these two agencies—committees and check lists—the caucus system has assumed, in various places, all of the forms which make up the whole chain of development between the primitive caucus above described and the elaborate primary organizations in New York city which will alone be further mentioned, as the ultimate form toward which the whole caucus system is tending. There are in New York three primary election systems, the republican, Tammany hall, and democratic. The basis of the republican system is the republican district associations, of which there is one in each of the 24 assembly districts. These associations are permanent clubs, sending delegates to the republican central committee composed of 159 members, which has the general direction of the affairs of the republican party in the city, and is, in its turn, practically controlled by a small executive committee. The district associations all have the same constitution, which is published together with that of the central committee, and this constitution can only be amended by a vote of two-thirds of all of the associations after the amendment has been proposed by the central committee at the request of five of the associations. A meeting of a district association is theoretically a caucus of the republicans of the assembly district in which it is located. The fact is, however, widely different. No person is admitted to the meeting of the association, *i. e.*, to the primary meeting or caucus, who is not a member of the association. But in

order to become a member of the association it is necessary to be proposed by one who is already a member. The applicant's name must then be posted upon a bulletin board ; after which, a report upon the applicants may be presented to a meeting of the association, and all those whose names are favorably reported may become members of the association, provided a majority of the members present at such meeting vote in their favor, and provided that the applicant shall thereafter sign the roll within a specified period, but not otherwise. It is, however, a prerequisite to signing the roll that applicants should take a pledge, observance of which is a condition of admission to, or continuance in, the membership of any primary association. This pledge requires that the applicant shall : 1. "Support the republican party organization of which the association is a recognized portion." 2. "Submit to the legally expressed action of the association and of the central committee." 3. "Honorably sustain all nominations made by the republican party through its legally constituted conventions called or recognized by the central committee." 4. "Not become a member of any committee or body which does not recognize the authority of the association."

In order to secure the better observance of these pledges, there is in each association a standing committee for the investigation of breaches of them, known as the committee on discipline, and it is provided that for a wilful failure "to keep the pledge of membership, any guilty member may be expelled by the vote of a majority at any meeting" of the association. This authority has been frequently exercised, and it has been stretched so far that in one case a member was expelled because he had opposed the nomination by the president to a federal office, of one of the officers of the association. The

tendency is obviously to control the whole political action of members of the association, and to exclude from membership such republicans as decline to allow such control, or to take the required pledges. As a matter of fact the very great majority of republicans are thus excluded. Although there are no means of ascertaining exactly how many republicans belong to these associations, their number probably does not exceed one-tenth of the whole. The remaining nine-tenths are for all party purposes disfranchised. They have no share whatever in making nominations, they can have no standing in conventions, and they are not recognized by the party organization as members of the party. At the election of 1880, the republican vote in New York city was about 80,000, while the rolls of the republican associations contained less than 15,000 names, and a large number of these names were of persons who had died, or removed. In 1879, Mr. George Bliss, than whom no person can be better qualified to speak on this subject, in a letter to Mr. Arthur, says: "The rolls are deceptive; in one district half the names of those on the rolls are not known in the district. These bogus names afford a convenient means for fraudulent voting," and the rolls of other districts "are full of the names of men not republicans." It may, therefore, be fairly said that 8,000 is a liberal estimate of the number of republicans who are members of these associations, and who are, therefore, eligible to participate in the primaries.—Such is the constitution and membership of the republican primaries. They are not representative but exclusive, and because of the conditions of membership they are composed of the least worthy portion of the party. In case an association expels or refuses to admit a member, a nominal remedy is provided, by an appeal to the central committee, but

that body frequently refuses to act on such appeals, and if the district association simply refuses to act upon the name of any applicant, there are no means of compelling them to do so.

The procedure of these associations is quite as far removed from that of the primitive caucus as their constitution. The officers are permanent and elected annually, the voting is by secret ballot, and a meeting together of any considerable number of the members of any association is extremely rare. Practically, all the business of the association is transacted by small committees. If, for instance, a candidate is to be nominated, or delegates to a nominating convention are to be chosen, a ticket prepared by the executive committee is printed, and the function of the association is discharged by voting for or against this ticket, for which purpose the polls are open for two or three hours in an evening, and probably not more than half a dozen members of the association will meet together during that time.

The Tammany system is theoretically completely popular; primary elections are nominally held in each of the election districts of the assembly districts, or altogether in 678 election districts, to which all democrats, resident in the respective districts, are invited. After the polls are closed, the ballots are, however, subjected to a process called "inspection" by the central committee of Tammany hall or its appointees, and in its practical workings the whole Tammany system is a farce. Under the cloak of popular forms, it is one of the most complete and corrupt instrumentalities for the centralization of power which has yet been devised.

The democratic system is the result of the reorganization of the various anti-Tammany democratic fac-

tions, brought about in 1881 by a practically self-appointed committee of 100. Under this system primary elections are to be held annually in each of 678 election districts, at which all democratic electors resident in the respective districts may participate, provided they were registered at the last general election. The persons voting at any primary shall be members of the election district association for the ensuing year, which is to be organized in January of each year. The associations may admit democratic residents in their respective districts who are not members, to membership, and they have general supervision of the interests of the party within their districts. Primaries are held on not less than four days' public notice through the newspapers, of the time and place, and at the appointed time the meeting is called to order by the chairman of the election district association, provided 20 persons be present; if that number shall not be present, the meeting may be called to order with a less number at the end of fifteen minutes. The first business of the meeting is to select a chairman, and all elections of delegates or committeemen shall take place in open meeting. Each person, as he offers to vote, states his name and residence, which may be compared with the registration list at the last election, and each person shall state for whom he votes, or he may hand to the judges an open ballot having designated thereon the persons for whom he votes and for what positions. Nominations are all made by conventions of delegates from the districts within which the candidate to be chosen is to be voted for. There is an assembly district committee in each assembly district, composed of one delegate for each 100 votes or fraction thereof, from each election district within the assembly district. There is also a

county committee, composed of delegates from each of the assembly district committees. The function of these committees is generally to look after the interests of the parties within their respective spheres. This system is too new for its workings to be as yet fairly criticised. It may prove a really popular system, or it may prove only an inchoate form of the other systems; at present it can only be said that the first primaries under it were participated in by 27,000 electors.

IV. The evils of the caucus and primary election system lie in the stringent obligation which is attached to the will of a formal majority; in the fact, that the process of ascertaining what the will of the majority is, has been surrounded with so many restrictions that the actual majority of voters are disfranchised, and take no part in that process, so that the formal majority is in consequence no longer the majority in fact, although it continues to demand recognition of its decisions as such; and in the further fact, that under a debauched system of civil service the machinery for making nominations, or for finding out what the will of the majority is, has fallen largely under the control of those who hold or seek public office, as a consequence of the prevailing theory that such offices are the proper reward of political services, and the spoil of the victors in a political contest. This conception of public offices as spoils furnishes officeholders with an illegitimate incentive to political activity, the effect of which is seen in the fact of their control of the organization. In the democratic organization in New York, a very large number of those who serve on committees and direct primary elections are officeholders, and in the republican organization, under the Arthur and Cornell régime, in 19 out of the 24 assembly districts the chairman of the

district associations, in whom is vested an almost controlling power, was a federal officeholder, the secretaries of these associations were likewise federal officeholders, and in the central committee, out of 159 members, 93 were salaried servants of the federal government. It is obviously preposterous to assume that a primary system thus officered, and including only one-tenth of the voters of a party, represents that party, yet this is precisely the assumption which is acted upon by the republicans of New York. The organization described is the regular organization, and none other is recognized. It exercises all the authority of a majority. It chooses all delegates to conventions, makes all nominations, and its nominees are supported upon no other possible theory than that they are the choice of the majority. Very distinguished men have taken pains to make it known that they always support the "regular" ticket, and as they and the large class they lead, have actively supported the men most obnoxious to them, whose nominations were stated to be for the purpose of "disciplining the party," nominations have come to be made without regard to this class, and to suit the pleasure of the nominating machine. In consequence, elective officers have come to look upon those who thus control the nominating machinery, and not the mass of voters, as their true constituents, and to act accordingly. The separation between the organization and the party, between those who nominate and those who elect, is the sum of the evils of the highly organized caucus system. It has its roots in the notion that the majority is right, because it is the majority, which is the popular view, thus expressed by Hammond: "I think that when political friends consent to go into caucus for the nomination of officers, every member of such caucus is bound in honor to

support and carry into effect its determination. If you suspect that determination will be so preposterous that you cannot in conscience support it, then you ought on no account to become one of its members. To try your chance in a caucus and then because your wishes are not gratified, to attempt to defeat the result of the deliberation of your friends, strikes me as a palpable violation of honor and good faith. You caucus for no other possible purpose than under the implied agreement that the opinion and wishes of the minority shall be yielded to the opinions of the majority, and the sole object of caucusing is to ascertain what is the will of the majority. I repeat that unless you intend to carry into effect the wishes of the majority, however contrary to your own, you have no business at a caucus." (*Political History of New York*, vol. i., p. 192.)

In accordance with this theory the will of the majority becomes obligatory as soon as it is made known, and one can not assist at a caucus in order to ascertain the will of the majority, without thereby being bound to follow it; and the theory is so deeply rooted that, under the caucus and primary election system, it has been extended to cases in which the majorities are such only in form.

V. The remedies as well as the evils of the caucus and nominating system have been made the subject of general discussion in connection with civil service reform. It is claimed that that reform, by giving to public officers the same tenure of their positions which is enjoyed by the employés of a corporation or of a private business house, or during the continuance of efficiency and good behavior, would abolish or greatly diminish the evils of the caucus system, by depriving public officers of the illegitimate incentive to maintain it under which they

now act. Other more speculative remedies have been suggested. It is proposed, on the one hand, to very greatly diminish the number of elective offices, and, in order to do away with the pre-determination of elections, to restrict the political action of the people in their own persons to districts so small that they can meet together and act as one body, and that in all other affairs than those of these small districts the people should act by delegates. The theory here seems to be, by doing away with elections, so far as may be, to get rid of the necessity for election and nominating machinery. (See "A True Republic," by Albert Strickney, New York, 1879, and a series of articles in *Scribner's Monthly* for 1881, by the same writer.) On the other hand, it is proposed to greatly increase the number of elections, by taking the whole primary system under the protection of the law. This plan proposes: 1. The direct nomination of candidates by the members of the respective political parties in place of nominations by delegates in conventions. 2. To apply the election laws to primary elections. 3. To provide that both political parties shall participate in the same primary election instead of having a different caucus for each party. 4. To provide for a final election to be held between two candidates, each the representative of a party, who have been selected by means of the primary election.

This plan would undoubtedly do away with the evils of the present caucus system, but it contains no guarantee that a new caucus system would not be erected for the purpose of influencing "the primary election" in the same manner in which the present primary system now influences the final election. (See, however, "The Elective Franchise in the United States," New York, 1880, by D. C. McMillan.)

The effective remedy for the evils of the caucus system will probably be found in the sanction of primary elections by law, in accordance with some such form as is known in Pennsylvania as the "Crawford County System," so called after the usage of that county, which provides for a direct vote by the electors within a district for the person to be nominated, and that the person receiving the greatest number of votes shall be the candidate. But no satisfactory method of thus legalizing primaries has yet been devised. Bills for this purpose were introduced by the Hon. Erastus Brooks into the New York legislature in 1881, which provided substantially for the system proposed by Mr. McMillan, but they were left unacted upon, and no legislative attempt to regulate primaries, except by providing for their being called and for their procedure, has been made elsewhere. In Ohio what is known as the Baber law provides that where any voluntary political association orders a primary, it must be by a majority vote of the central or controlling committee of such party or association; that the call must be published for at least five days in the newspapers, and state the time and place of the meeting, the authority by which it was called, and the name of the person who is to represent that authority at each poll. The law also provides for challenging voters, for the punishment of illegal voting, and for the bribery or intervention of electors or judges. (Rev. Stat. Ohio, secs. 2916-2921.) A similar law in Missouri is made applicable to counties only of over 100,000 inhabitants, but by this law it is made optional with the voluntary political association whether it will or not hold its primaries under the law, and if it does, it is provided that the county shall incur no expense in the conduct of such elections. (Laws

of Missouri, 1875, p. 54.) A similar law also exists in California. (Laws of California, 1865-6, p. 438.) These laws comprise all the existing legislation on the subject.

Until an effective legal control of the caucus system shall be devised, and the civil service shall be reformed, the only remedy at hand for the evils of the caucus system is a greater amount of what has been described as "individuality in politics." Public opinion may in this country never permit self-nominations to elective officers, but in smaller districts, at least, very much may be accomplished by spontaneous or independent nominations, made by a few well-known men of high character, which shall claim popular support not because they pretend to be made by a majority of a party, but because they are intrinsically excellent, and are certified so to be by the men of recognized reputation who make them. If, however, character can not be thus in some degree substituted for the majority as the basis of the political action, individuals must make it plain that the authority of the majority rests in the fact of its being right, and not merely in the fact of its real or pretended existence. Votes should not be yielded unconditionally at the mention of the party name, and until the legal remedy for the existing caucus shall be found, the true attitude of the individual toward it is perhaps best expressed by John Jay in the following language used by him in a letter replying to criticisms of himself for bolting a caucus nomination in 1812. He says: "We approve of the customary mode of nominating candidates, and have uniformly concurred in it; that concurrence certainly involved our tacit consent to be bound by the nomination which should be so made. But it is equally certain that such consent did, does and ever will rest on the condition, trust and confidence that such nominations only

be made as we could or can support without transgressing the obligation we are under to preserve our characters and our minds free from humiliation and reproach." (Life and Writings of John Jay, vol. i., p. 448.)

FREDERICK W. WHITRIDGE.

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